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ABSTRACT

Arguing that the principal is a major player in any phase of educational change, this paper describes the principal's critical role in planning for change in a library media center. The paper is divided into three sections. In Section 1 the first of the two major phases of planning for change is described. It is noted that during this "initiation" phase of change, the principal and the school library media specialist work together to evaluate and assess the library media center program as it relates to the guidelines outlined in the publication, "Information Power." Section 2 describes the second phase, which involves gathering information and consulting the school staff and community to determine their needs. Section 3 is a case study which exemplifies the two planning phases for change. The study presents a planning for change scenario which calls for more technological access in a library media center. (6 references) (MAB)

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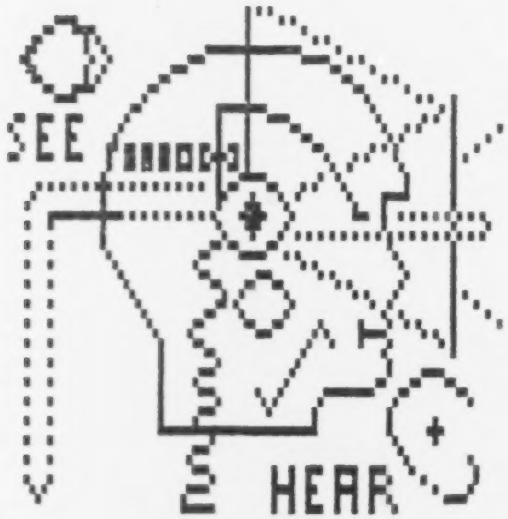
The Principal's Role in Implementing INFORMATION POWER



The New National Guidelines For School Library Media Centers

Catherine M. Townsend

Fall 1988

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Introduction

School year 1988 / 1989 should prove to be a good one for the public school library media programs throughout South Carolina. Early in the year, the American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, the two national professional organizations concerned with library media programs, jointly published the long anticipated national guidelines. Titled INFORMATION POWER: GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA PROGRAMS, this publication sets forth in qualitative terms what a high service, successful library media program encompasses. Also during the 1987/1988 school year an extensive study was made of the current status of school library media programs throughout South Carolina. Soon to be published, this study gives district figures for several quantitative measures used when evaluating library media programs. A second phase of this study will look at the state-wide qualitative levels of service for these programs. There is throughout the state an emphasis on assessing the library media programs and a push to implement the guidelines advocated by INFORMATION POWER.

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Statement of the Problem

The curriculum, or learning environment, within each school is successful only so far as there are sufficient instructional materials to support that curriculum, and according to Hamilton (1983), the building level principal is committed to providing the resources and services which support this curriculum(p. 34).Fullen (1978) says that building level principals who are most effective focus more of their attention on program development while the other not so effective principals do not (p.133). Leadership in the implementation and institutionalization of new, worthwhile programs or even the renewal and restructuring of current programs is seen by most members of the educational profession as the most essential role of the school principal(Hanson, 1987, p.126).

Planning for educational change begins with time spent assessing the current status and needs of the school. Fullan calls this the initiation (p.40-41) phase of change, and according to Havelock, it is Stage II, or Diagnosis. Whatever it is termed, obtaining an accurate picture of the current program (or problem), and the needs that are evident, is the first step in any change program. When dealing with the library media program specifically, the principal and the school library media specialist should work together to accurately describe the present program and then determine the general areas which need

improvement(INFORMATION POWER p. 48). For example, using the survey criteria for library media programs found in the Appendix to INFORMATION POWER (p.116) and used in the 1988/1989 research on South Carolina school library media programs (Townsend p.13) as a guide, the principal and school library media specialist can determine the present service level of their particular program and can then "judge" it against both district, state, and national figures. The service level criteria found in INFORMATION POWER is reproduced below to show exactly what aspects of the library media program should be evaluated.

THE LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER STAFF:
1. Offers a sequential program of library skills instruction.
2. Coordinates library skills instruction with classroom work.
3. Informally instructs students in the use of materials/equipment.
4. Conducts inservices for teachers on evaluating, selecting, and using instructional media.
5. Assists curriculum committees in selecting appropriate materials and media programs for resource units and curriculum guides.
6. Helps individual teachers develop, select, use and evaluate learning activities with varied media formats.
7. Helps teacher coordinate media center activities and resources with subject areas, units, and textbooks.
8. Provides staff with information about new educational and media developments.
9. Provides reference assistance for teachers.
10. Assists students in locating information and resources they need.
11. Helps students and teachers find and use relevant outside sources.
12. Provides interlibrary loan services for students.
13. Provides interlibrary loan services for teachers/administration.
14. Provides reading/listening/viewing guidance for students.
15. Helps parents realize the importance of reading.
16. Coordinate in-school production of materials for teaching.
17. Provides assistance to students in the production of materials.
18. Provides assistance to teachers in the production of materials.
19. Coordinates textbook selection, ordering and distribution.

20.Coordinates school-operated radio station.
21.Coordinates video production activities within the school.
22.Coordinates in-house broadcasts of ITV videos.

During this self-evaluation, if it was found that the library media program did not address the technological needs of the student body or the teachers (see items #3, 7, 8, 16, 18, 20-22) then this area might be the one in which change is to be made. Or, if the self-evaluation found that teachers were not utilizing the library media program or the school library media specialist to assist with curriculum development and preparation (see items #2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 19) then this area might be a prime target for change. If on the other hand the qualitative measures for the library media program, that is the school library media specialist ratio, books/student, secondary budget figure, or seating (Townsend p.14) were found to be below district, state, or national figures to a degree that impaired the functions of the library media program then a serious change in funding would be necessary to bring these figures up to the level desired.

Once this self-evaluation has been completed, the school library media specialist and the principal should determine the long-range goals or targets for their change effort. At this point, making use of Havelocks Stage III and IV (p.77-109) would help insure a successful change effort. What these stages are and how can they be used by the principal working with his school library media specialist is the main concern of the remainder of this article.

The Focus For Change

Havelock's Stage III can be seen, perhaps, as the paperwork stage in the process of planning for implementation. It is at this point that the principal and the school library media specialist seek as much information related to their goals and objectives as possible. They should begin by consulting the school staff itself, both informally in conversation and formally using a survey based on the findings of the self-evaluation. At this point also, the community should be involved. It can be either through a committee from the community established to help determine goals and objectives or through a version of the same survey given to the school staff. Students should not be forgotten either and their reactions to the projected goals and objectives should be considered because it is their needs that will be the main focus of any programs designed for the library media center. Along with gathering information from the local environment, a search should be made of all available sources for literature dealing specifically with targeted goals and objectives. Access to the ERIC databases, the Wilson education and related databases and the other several hundred magazines found through the Dialog system would be the best places to begin this search.

Once all of this interviewing, surveying, and literature searching has been completed and tabulated, it is up to the

principal and school library media specialist and perhaps a committee of faculty and community members to narrow the larger list of goals and objectives to one that can be realistically implemented. This can be done by assigning specific people to match goals with solutions or suggestions found during the information gathering phase. This longer list can then be ranked by the whole community (i.e. the school staff, students, and parents) and narrowed to manageable proportions. Once the choice of programs or solutions has been finalized the principal should spend time becoming familiar with all the literature collected on these specific topics. It will be primarily up to the principal to see that these solutions are successfully implemented (Hamilton, p.38). Face to face examination of similar programs is an excellent means of evaluating choices. So is conversation with other principals who have either implemented, or attempted to implement similar programs.

Another committee, this one composed of a cross section from the faculty, and from the community, should be established to begin working on strategies to implement the specific goal(s) chosen. The principal must be an active and involved member of this committee, lending his support and expertise to all phases of the planning period (Fullen p. 132). Without this involvement little effective change can occur.

Actual implementation should begin only after the entire school has been briefed on the new changes and has had a chance to become familiar with what is involved in them and how they

personally will be affected by these changes. The faculty must be made to feel that the changes are in their own best interest, the children's best interest, and the communitity's best interests (Hanson, p.126). Implementation cannot be rushed and should always be open for feedback and modification (Hanson).

The Case Study

Let us assume, for an actual example of how this process might evolve, that the self-examination of the library media center program found that there was a noticeable lack of technological access for both teachers and students. This was seen in the fact that there were too few computers, a lack of software both for educational enrichment and instructional management, and no organized computer literacy program for anyone in the school. During the information gathering (Stage III) phase, services in the library media center were inadequate on questions 3, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 10 on the list of services suggested in INFORMATION POWER. When this lack was pinpointed, a survey was designed to find out in what priority the three elements of the school environment felt these needs should be met. This survey, in slightly modified forms, was given to parents, the faculty, and the students on a random basis. The results of this information gathering process were found to be the following.

1) The teachers determined that they wanted access to a

computer, printer and appropriate software in each lounge for instructional management during their planning periods.

2) The parents said that they wanted an organized computer literacy and word processing curriculum for their children.

3) The students showed, in about equal parts, that they wanted access to educational games and word processing at least once a day for a full period.

With this list of specific goals in hand, it now becomes the job of the principal and the school library media specialist to begin a literature search to locate recommended programs which emphasize one or more of these goals. They need to look for literature that elaborates on how the programs were designed, how schedules were derived, how they were housed and funded, and how they were equipped and staffed. They should also look to see if all three of these individual goals have been addressed by one specific program. Once this search has been completed and the information read and summarized, a committee composed of teachers and parents should look at the solutions found, judge them against the specific needs of their schools, and begin to formulate a program designed for their own individual conditions. No program should be adopted "as is" because the needs of each school, each student body, and each faculty are different and must be taken into consideration when programs are set up (Havelock, p.109).

The principal is then responsible for taking the recommendations of this committee and putting these together

with the overall school goals and programs to determine if the funding can be found to support this new program, if there is manpower available to staff it, and if there is space in which to house it. Even though the school library media specialist and the teachers play an active and vital role in the planning process for new programs, it is at the bottom line, the principal who must provide the resources to make this program work. Without his ability to locate, allocate, and schedule these resources, no new program can be implemented in the school.

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